

Hobbies

High-tech age calls for new counterfeiting deterrents

By Roger Boye

Uncle Sam has established a Securities Technology Institute to help protect greenbacks from forgers using sophisticated computer technology.

Among other things, the institute is supposed to design and test advanced counterfeit deterrents for use in Federal Reserve notes.

"Any changes we make [in money] would be subtle—effective, durable and capable of meeting our production capacity," said Leah Akbar, a spokesperson for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which produces U.S. paper money and created the institute.

"We've always had research

and development in the bureau," Akbar added. "The institute will be a more focused effort."

Counterfeiting is an ongoing problem for the U.S. Secret Service, which seized or received nearly \$87 million worth of bogus money in fiscal 1991. Officials are finding an increasing number of fakes produced on color copying machines.

U.S. Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Texas), among others, has called for a wholesale redesign of U.S. paper money to foil counterfeiters using high-quality materials and computers. He believes that Federal Reserve notes are copied with ease because of their simple design and color scheme.

But Peter H. Daly, director of

the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, contends that the basic architecture of the greenback should be preserved "so that its international recognizability stays strong." In a letter to *Coin World*, Daly added that traditional anti-counterfeiting measures—such as color, intricate designs and larger portraits—have declined in deterrent value in the face of sophisticated technologies.

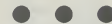
So far this year, the government has released new \$100, \$50 and \$20 Federal Reserve notes on paper containing a polyester thread that copying machines cannot duplicate. The threads have preserved the look of U.S. currency while adding a quality and security device, Daly said.

Meanwhile, Canon USA has re-

ported that it soon will add either one or two counterfeit deterrents to its new color copiers in an attempt to thwart would-be forgers.

One technology places an invisible code on every copy made so that police could trace the machine that duplicated a dollar bill or other document. The company also might produce machines that print black copies of greenbacks and other bank notes because of information programmed into the machine's computer memory.

Canon has a 70 percent share of the worldwide color-copier market.



Uncle Sam will create a "Citizen's Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee" under leg-

islation signed by President Bush in October, but some experts believe that the new group will be worth less than a plugged nickel.

The seven-member committee is supposed to recommend the names of people and places that merit new commemorative coins, although members of Congress still can introduce legislation calling for special coinage on any theme they wish.

"As well-meaning as this committee may be, we doubt it will have any significant impact," said a Numismatic News editorial. "Congress, swayed by special interests, will still have control."

So far, lawmakers have approved 41 commemorative coin types for the 1990s, the most for any one decade in U.S. history.